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'Headbanging or dancing? - youth and music in Australia

A major new research study into youth and music in Australia provides insights on young people's attitudes and behaviour regarding music.

The study found there was wide variation in music tastes, with favourite types ranging from rock to rap and heavy metal to dance. Commercial FM was the favoured radio format of many, although Triple J was also popular. More than one in three young Australians said there is not enough Australian music on radio. Young people were most likely to buy their music on CD and an increasing proportion use the Internet to access information on performers.

Headbanging or Dancing? Youth and Music in Australia is the result of a joint research project by the Australian Broadcasting Authority, the Australia Council and the Australian Record Industry Association (ARIA).

The research findings come from a national survey of 1085 people aged 12 to 24 years. Young people were asked about the role of music in their lives, their attitudes to



Australian music, the ways they accessed music, their views on music on radio and television, what sort of live music events they attended, whether they played music, how they purchased music and their use of the Internet for music related activities.

'The results on young people's attitudes to music on radio will be helpful to the ABA in its decisions about the planning and allocation of new radio services. The findings on attitudes to Australian music will also feed into any review of the requirements for Australian music on commercial radio, currently cov-

ered by a code of practice,' said Mr Gareth Grainger, Acting ABA Chairman.

The Chair of the Australia Council, Dr Margaret Seares said the research coincides with the finalisation of the Council's first ever national youth and the arts policy framework.

'The Council remains concerned about the level of support provided for the creative development of young artists as well as the level of involvement of young people as arts audiences. I am confident this research report and the Council's new policy framework will both contribute to meet-

ing the needs of young Australians,' said Dr Seares.

Mr Emmanuel Candi, Executive Director of the Australian Record Industry Association said the study confirmed the significant role that music played in young people's lives.

'The research shows that most young people access music through purchasing CDs or tapes at a music store, but the recorded music industry is fully aware that the media landscape and environment continues to change in Australia with the introduction of new services and new technology. These will require new



copyright laws for, and heavy investment by, the industry.'

The research

This project explored the role that music plays in the lives of youth. The research partners, the ABA, the Australia Council and ARIA, were interested in many different aspects of young people's music behaviour. While each of the research partners has an interest

codes of practice developed by the broadcasting industry and registered by the ABA.

This research will inform the ABA's licensing process, especially in relation to community services that may address the needs of local youth through new youth-oriented services.

The Australia Council is the Federal Government's principal arts funding and advisory body. It serves the Australian

odology. In June 1997, the ABA published results of the first stage in *Youth and Music in Australia — A Review*. Juliet London and Jenny Header of Juliet London Research and Consultancy Pty Ltd prepared this summary and review of research. The second stage involved interviews with at least fifteen key stakeholders representing the

sponses of the youth population as a whole.

General findings

Music is very important to young people and they spend a significant amount of their leisure time on music related activities. People aged 12 to 24 years experience music through media such as radio



Richard Kingsmill, JJJ, launching *Headbanging or Dancing?*, at the Basement in Sydney on 4 February

in this area, the emphasis of this interest varies.

The ABA is responsible for the planning, licensing and regulation of broadcasting services in Australia. Objectives under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* include the desirability of program diversity and the need for media to foster an Australian cultural identity. The ABA conducts and commissions research into community attitudes on issues relating to programs and findings are published to provide information on the diverse needs, interests and values of the Australian community. Relevant ABA research must be taken into account in the development and review of

community by stimulating and enriching the cultural life of Australia. The project will inform the Australia Council's development of strategies for youth arts and explores issues in support of contemporary or popular Australian music.

ARIA represents the broad interests of all member record companies. Its functions include acting as an advocate for the industry, domestically and internationally and being a focus for industry opinion and compiler of industry information and views.

Research method

The project involved four stages using different meth-

I couldn't imagine life without music. I really couldn't. I think it would be dreadful

18-24 year old, Sydney

radio and record industries, youth organisations, academics and musicians. Fourteen focus group discussions were conducted by ABA researchers with a total of 114 people aged 12 to 24 years in various locations around Australia. Finally, the research partners commissioned Quadrant Research Services to conduct a national survey of 1085 people aged 12 to 24 years. The results provide reliable estimates of the re-

and television, recorded music, and through attendance at live music events and nightclubs. Many also actively participate by playing, singing or composing music themselves. The project also explored how new services and new technology are having an impact on young people's access and consumption of music.

Results from the project highlight the diversity of young people's preferences and interests in different types of



At the launch l-r: Adrian Fitz-Alan, General Manager, Business & Corporate Affairs, Sony Music Entertainment; Cathy O'Brien, Solicitor, ARIA; Emmanuel Candi, Executive Director, ARIA



music. Their musical tastes and preferences are influenced by many different factors such as age, gender and geography. Exposure to different types of music through family, friends or different media also influences the development of music preferences.

Role of music in young people's lives

• There is a great diversity amongst young people in their preferences for certain types of music. Eighteen per cent named rock music as their

Attitudes to Australian music

- While a majority of people said that Australian music or artists were as good as those from countries such as the USA and UK, many still preferred music from the USA.
- While one in two said there was not enough music by Australian performers on radio, 38 per cent said there was not enough.

Accessing music

• One in two said the main way they listened to music



centre: Deborah Klika, Councillor, Australia Council; John Rimmer, ABA member and Councillor, Australia Council

favourite music type, followed by dance, techno and trance (11 per cent), pop music (nine per cent), heavy metal and thrash (eight per cent), and alternative music (eight per cent).

• Friends were mentioned by 85 per cent of respondents as an influence on their taste in music. Seventy-two per cent mentioned radio and 51 per cent mentioned television.

• Radio was the most common source of information about bands or music that young people were already familiar with, and about new or latest release music.

was on CDs, and a third listened to radio.

• The majority said they acquired music from music stores. When asked to nominate all options, 89 per cent said they bought music from music stores and 67 per cent said they recorded or borrowed music from friends.

Live music

• At least fifty per cent said they attended live concerts with international music artists, outside music festivals, live concerts with Australian music artists, or clubs or night-clubs.



l-r: Stephen Atkins, Manager Codes & Conditions, ABA; David Smith, Codes & Conditions, ABA; Barry Melville, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia; Gillian Ramsay ABC (the author of the report while at the ABA)

Participation

• Eighty per cent said they had participated in music activities at some time, while 35 per cent said they participated on a regular basis. Playing an instrument was the most frequently mentioned activity.

Purchasing music

• The 91 per cent of respondents who had bought at least one CD over the past year, had bought an average of 16 CDs each.

Online services and new technology

• Fifty-seven per cent of survey respondents had used the Internet in the previous six months (conducted at the end of 1997). Of those, 53 per cent had accessed sites for bands or performers and 25 per cent had accessed sites of radio stations.

Copies of the monograph, *Headbanging or Dancing? Youth and Music in Australia*, are available from the ABA, price \$20. Tel. (02) 9334 7700.



Katie, vocalist with sugarchild, the Western Australian band which played at the launch

Photographs: Rhonda Thwaite